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## **PRESS RELEASE**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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For Information Contact Public Affairs  
HARRIETT BERNICK  
Telephone: (602) 514-7736  
Pager: (602) 356-0004

# **23-YEAR-OLD SACATON MAN SENTENCED TO OVER 22 YEARS IN PRISON FOR SHOOTING HIS 21-YEAR-OLD COUSIN**

**PHOENIX, ARIZONA** -- Paul K. Charlton, United States Attorney for the District of Arizona, announced today that Gilbert Gonzales (DOB 8/6/80) was sentenced to 272 months prison and five years supervised release for Second Degree Murder and Use of a Firearm During a Crime of Violence for shooting his own cousin, a 21-year-old Sacaton man and causing his death.

The defendant pleaded guilty on February 20, 2003, and was sentenced today by District Court Judge Mary H. Murguia. The case involved the defendant and two juvenile accomplices kidnaping the victim at gunpoint from a crowded home on the night of May 13, 2002. The reason for the kidnaping was that the victim owed the defendant approximately \$400 for drug money. The victim was the defendant's 21-year-old cousin. After the group kidnaped the victim, the defendant shot him repeatedly. The group then took the victim to the desert to bury him. The victim was still alive when the defendant told him to climb into his own grave. At the burial site, the defendant shot the victim again and then beat him over the head with a shovel.

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Based upon the statements of witnesses who were located in the home from which the victim had been abducted, the defendant was arrested for the kidnaping within 24 hours. However, the body of the victim was not recovered until several months later. As part of the defendant's plea agreement, the defendant agreed to cooperate with the government and provide evidence against the others involved with the kidnaping and murder. The defendant further revealed where the group had buried the victim. As a result of the defendant's plea and assistance to the government, the victim's decomposed remains were located in a shallow grave on the Gila River Indian Reservation. Further, four other individuals involved in the case have been identified. Three of those individuals have plead guilty and are pending sentencing.

The investigation was conducted by the Gila River Police Department and the Federal Bureau of Investigations. The prosecution was handled by Sharon K. Sexton, Assistant United States Attorney, District of Arizona, Phoenix, Arizona.

CASE NUMBER: CR02-619-PHX-MHM  
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